

With the Ta' and Shammar Bedouins

man without a single enemy", Arabs have called him 157
to me. 534

I was Mishal's guest for several weeks. In the company 231
of his son Naif, I was able to look over a large number 435
of Arab horses amongst the different Shammar clans.
One two-year-old Saqlawi-Shaifi stallion of purest blood
pleased me exceedingly. One day I enquired of the
sbrykb's secretary if he thought it possible that Mishal
would sell this stallion. It had indeed come to my ears
that Mishal had refused an offer of eight hundred gold
pounds from the French Remount Service. From my
experience, I knew that really thoroughbred Arab
horses were quite rare and therefore exceedingly expensive.
Considering the stallion's breeding, the French offer
certainly did not appear too high, when one remembers
that foreign military commissions and breeders have
paid in the desert anything up to three thousand pounds
gold for blue-blooded stallions.

I asked the scribe to submit my offer to his *sbrykb* up
to one thousand pounds gold. I also declared myself [431]
ready to make the customary presents to the *katib*
(secretary) and to the slave who had looked after the
stallion from birth.

That same day I sat with Mishal and his son Naif and 574
their friends until late into the night. By the light of 231
the campfire I showed them photographs of Arab horses, 572
among them the stallions and mares which I had bought
from the stud of Lady Anne Blunt's daughter in Eng-
land, for the ranch in California.

"Is it known to thee," asked Mishal, "that Lord Blunt
and my father Faris formed a blood brotherhood fifty

Hunting and Warfare

574 years ago? He, as thou, loved our fast and enduring run-
291 ners, those 'Drinkers of the Wind', which Allah be-
572 stowed on our forefather Ishmael."

Neither the scribe nor anyone else said a word about the stallion, and I dared not ask again; for I imagined that Mishal was particularly fond of this young horse.

574 The day of my departure came. The patriarchal
431 *shaykh* and I exchanged words of formal farewell. Then he led me aside and bade me sit down with him at the farthest tent-peg. After a few minutes of silence, he took two documents from a leather pouch and said: "I have long noticed that thou hast taken the Saqlawi colt to thy heart. He is the best of our breeding, and I am happy to make thee a present of him, that thou mayest always remember our friendship and noble horses. Take the young stallion with thee and mention no thanks nor price, so that this remembrance may live forever unclouded in our hearts."

"The Lord be good to thee, O Mishal ibn Faris," I replied, "for that I am allowed to part from thee with such happy memories."

[181] What more could I say in response to his simple words? I knew the Bedouins. To be open-handed makes most of them happy; and further, Mishal was a very rich man. To him "belonged" not only the Shammar in [423] the Northern Jesirah (Mesopotamia), but he actually owned sixty-nine villages and their cultivated lands on the Khabur River. I could only hope that God would grant me the opportunity some time of showing my heartfelt thanks to Mishal in some special way.

Badawin Honour

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keeps for breeding. Similarly, young male camels are sold for food²³¹ and only a selected few retained to carry the household tents and⁽⁴⁷²⁾ baggage.

Mares are never sold, and the male foals, if not killed at birth, are a source of income when sold in the towns bordering on Arabia. (See Chapter XXX.)

The Badawin of the desert has a charm of his own, and if you⁶⁷² once make friends with him or do him a kindness, he does not forget. ⁵⁷⁷ He is above all things a child of nature, and is ruled by a strange pride which he calls his *sharaf* and which he values almost above life itself. Scold a desert man or call him ugly names, and he is ready to knife you; at the very least he will culk, dig his toes into the ground and do nothing that you wish. On the other hand, if you treat him kindly, invite him to sit down in your tent and take a cup of coffee with you, you have gone half-way to win his friendship and confidence. If you treat him as an equal, and not as a servant, even if he is merely your guide or escort, he will react wonderfully and will rarely take liberties.

He is full of humour too, and will understand a joke and a good⁶⁷² story, but you must not make fun of him before his fellow Arabs.

Next to his *sharaf*, the Badawin, and for that matter every true⁶⁷⁷ Arab, values his family honour or '*arâ*'. This word implies the good name of his womenfolk and more especially of his wife and sister. If his '*arâ*' is besmirched nothing short of killing the errant woman will restore it. Respect the Badawin's *sharaf*, speak well always of his '*arâ*' and help him to guard both, and all will be well with you in your relations with him.

However poor he is and however lowly his dwelling-place, the⁵⁷⁴ Badawin excels as a host, and will slay his last camel or sheep to do honour to his guest. Nor are his womenfolk behindhand in this respect. If an important personage passes by her tent in the absence of her husband, the wife will run out of her tent holding out a frothing bowl of camel's milk or *islat*, as a sign of welcome.

THE BADAWIN'S FAULTS

The desert man has his faults, of course, and by Western standards⁶⁰⁰ they are grave.

Surrender

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during years and centuries of cold and counter-cold. Men always knew that to-day they might be top-dog and to-morrow the under-dog. It was but wise and natural to declare women sacred. The Bedouin world valued wives and daughters above all other possessions, so the principle of "You let my womenfolk alone, and I will not harm yours" gradually became established. The rule holds good to-day all over Arabia. Unfortunately the fanatical Taliban, during the few years in which their influence was in the ascendant, a menace to both friend and foe in Najd, did much to upset this and many other excellent customs which are dear to the true Arab.

PROTECTION OF AN ENEMY WHO HAS SURRENDERED

The laws relating to surrender are dealt with in Chapter XXVI.

Suffice it to here say that a Bedouin surrendering to another either in battle or raid, or if pursued and overtaken, is safe and entitled to good treatment.

In surrendering a man will definitely say to one of the other side: *Ya fulan ana fi wajh al* (O So-and-So, I place myself under your protection). If he gets the reply: *lana fi wajh al, sallim salihah* (You are under my protection, hand over your arms), the matter is finished, and the person who has accepted the surrender must go bail for his captive with his life. He has given him his *wajh* (face), and it would go hard with any member of his own tribe who harmed the prisoner later, and so blackened the protector's face.

The rules regarding surrender are very similar to those of *dakhat*. The man who surrenders is in the position of a suppliant, and an Arab dare not ignore the fact. The only difference between the two is that when the enemy asks for quarter in battle, you may or may not grant his request. Once *wajh* is granted, however, the prisoner must be protected. A man who breaks this law is liable to a very heavy fine in camels or money, and he is never forgiven by his own tribesmen.

THE RASIQ OR KHAWI

The laws relating to the *rasiq* and *khaw* generally, are equally stringent, and are comparable to those of hospitality, only here the

Safe Conduct

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572 honour of the tribe as a whole is at stake, not alone the honour of the
4214 individual tent-dweller.

The word *rafq* means a friend or companion, and in the desert sense he is a man whose duty is to see you safely through his people's country (*awamida*), and through his tribal territory, even if it so happens that his tribe is at enmity with your own tribe or people.

The *rafq* usually does his business for a small fee.

A man desiring to travel, say from Kuwait to the Hijaz, would usually have to take *rafqs* from the Munis, Harh, 'Unila, Qidna and probably the Buzan or other local tribes.

If a *rafq* cannot for any reason accompany his client, it should be sufficient for him to give him his stick or cane (*'asa*), and march some with the tribal waan (*mark*) of his *huni*'den, or tribe, as a whip.

After handing over his *'asa*, the *rafq* will let it be known by word of mouth, and arrange for the news to be passed on, that he has given So-and-So his marked *'asa* as *rafq* or safe conduct. No one will now touch the traveller throughout the whole length and breadth of the *dirat* owned or wandered over by the *rafq*'s tribe.

Under the strong arm of Bin Sa'ud, many efforts have been made to discourage and even abolish this system of the *rafq* as unnecessary, and likely to bring the name and prestige of the Sa'udi Government into disrepute. Nevertheless, the *rafqs* system is suspiciously kept alive, as all men feel safer under a *rafq*'s protection than when trusting themselves to the tender mercies of some of the King's frontier guards, or inland governors.

It should be understood that as soon as you have safely passed through one tribal territory, the *rafq* who has finished his job must find a new *rafq* from the tribe whose territory you are about to enter, and so on till the journey is finished. It would be breaking the law of *rafqs* if your *rafq*, on completing his duties, deserted you and left you stranded. You could later get heavy compensation from the man and his shaykh, when you were able to prove your claim.

THE QASIA (pronounced *qasir*)

- 621 The laws of *qasra* embody the duty of a Badawin towards his
tent-neighbour.

CHAPTER XIII

Morality

517 There is no immorality, as we know it, among the desert tribes. There is, of course, plenty of marrying and giving in marriage, and as I have said, divorce is so easy that a woman often has six or seven husbands in her lifetime, and a man always as many wives as he can afford, provided he confines himself to four at a time. Prostitutes are 548 unknown among the Badawin, and adultery is punishable with death.

137 Friendships between men and women, on the other hand, exist, and are recognised, especially if the parties are of the same tribe and are related, for example my friend Shaikh Thuwairan Abu Sifra of the Mu'ala section of the Mutair, was a friend of Mudi, wife of Falaḥ bin 369 'A'amir, also of the Mu'ala. Every Badawin, of course, is aware that 548 immorality exists in the big towns, and this is one of the main reasons why he despises the townsmen.

Unfortunately a Badawin man up from the distant desert sometimes finds his way to the prostitute quarters when he visits towns [64] such as Mecca and Madina, Jiddah, and Kuwait. This has resulted in the spread of syphilis and venereal disease among the tribes.

In Wahhabi-land proper (i.e. Sa'udi Arabia, excluding the Hijaz), no prostitute is tolerated even in the towns, let alone among the tribes; but I am told that there is nevertheless a good deal of clandestine immorality.

731 It is curious but true that if you discuss the question of morals with 672 well-informed Najd Badawin, they will always tell you that certain great shaikhly families of the desert, especially in the north, have always had rather loose morals, while certain others stand out for their good morals and generally high tone. For instance, the well-known shaikhly house of Al Sha'alan (Ruḥala) as well as that of the Hsawaitar, Bani Sakhr (both Trans-Jordan), and Shammar Jarba (Iraq), are all said to be pretty lax where women are concerned, and conversely Al Hadhal (Amarat), the Duḥan (Mutair) and the Hamidda ('Utaiba)

Surrender

Chap. XXVI

WAR CRIES

Every Arab prince and Arab tribe has a special war cry. Some have several and some a single one. 721
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These war cries, called *nadwa* and *'awak*, are yelled out in the heat of battle, and especially during the wild charge of horsemen.

The war cry is supposed to strike terror into the foe. It also enables the individual warrior to recognise friend from enemy in the general mêlée that follows a charge—for every man as he goes into action muffs up his face till only his eyes are seen, and no uniforms distinguish combatants or discriminate friend from foe. (724)

SURRENDER

Among the Bedawin the equivalent of the European or Westerner's "Hands up" is for a man to drop his rifle on the ground and place the thumbs of both hands simultaneously between his teeth with the fingers of each hand extended outwards towards the person to whom he is surrendering. This is the normal method, when for instance a man is a fugitive and is about to be caught up and killed by his pursuers. The meaning of the act is that he realizes that all is up, he has been caught, he knows death is his portion, nevertheless he casts himself on God's mercy and on that of his enemies. In nine times out of ten he will be spared. 726
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Even in the heat of battle a man on the losing side can escape death if he recognises an old friend or acquaintance in the opposing ranks, by shouting out to him and saying, *Ya fulan, ana fi wejḥ-ak* (O So-and-So, I put myself under your protection). If the person so called upon has sufficient influence with his comrades to grant such protection, he replies, *Ataitak wejḥi sallam tafaytak* or *salahak* (I have given you my protection, hand over your rifle, or arms). Under such circumstances the suppliant is absolutely safe, and his guarantor goes bail for his life. 572
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Should the man appealed to not be of sufficient importance among his fellow fighters to guarantee the life of the suppliant, he will call out to him and advise him to demand protection from someone more influential than himself, i.e. *Utlub wejḥ fulan* (Call upon the

Dashing Raiders

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572 protection of So-and-So), and he will forthwith point out where he
724 is and who he is. Success is also assured this way.

When the Tikhwan were predominant in Najd, especially from 1920 to 1930, and for a time upset the laws of God and man, as, peaks such as the above went unchallenged, and whether a man surrendered or not he was put to the sword.

The man granting protection to an enemy on the field of battle can always reserve the right to add such provisos as, "Your life or rifle only are guaranteed, not your horse," or "Your life alone is safe, not your weapons or horse," or "I give you your life subject to my master, the sheikh's final orders".

FAMOUS RAIDERS I HAVE KNOWN

724 (i) Shaikh Muhammad bin Salim al Uthain of the Misra sept of the 'Ajman is perhaps the most dashing rider I have met. He did Bin Sa'ud's cause incalculable harm during the 1929-30 rebellion of the Tikhwan. A cheerful man and always laughing—short, of immense width of shoulder, with straight nose and a rather long jet-black beard with a pretty curl at the end of it.

His best piece of work was his raid from the borders of Kuwait (Wafra) to a point east of Abu Jifan Wells, on the direct Hafuf-Riyadh route. There he held up and captured several camel convoys, and ended by attacking, on 5th August, 1929, twelve cars full of armed men near Rumah as they proceeded across the Dahana sands from Riyadh to Hafuf. He captured and burnt them all, none of the crews escaping.

I happened to meet him on 22nd August, 1929, a fortnight after the event, when he tried to see the Shaikh of Kuwait in company with Fakhri bin Maslam, and beg supplies. He wore a large white turban after the fashion of the Tikhwan, and merrily told me how he had brought off his coup. He finished his story by handing me some sixty letters and cypher telegrams which the king had sent to Bahrain for despatch. These, he said, he took off a dead man. I was sorely tempted to take the telegrams and despatch them for the king myself, but thought better of it.

For several years after the above rebellion was put down, Muham-

Thieving

One ¹¹¹ who is mentioned in passing as a man who steals a slave of a prince or prominent Arab, whether in war or by underhand means, is never forgiven, and his death will be sought for and encompassed, if the original owner has to search for the culprit all his life and to the end of the earth.

THEFT

Common thieving, whether from enemy or friend, is considered 'all or a shameful thing among the true Badawin and is simply "not done".

The lifting of horses and camels from other Badawin with whom an ancient feud or enmity exists is not theft; it is a *glayya*, or honourable raid. The appropriation of other people's property never takes place between persons or tribes who are on terms of friendship or alliance.

Given a strong central government such as in Sa'udi Arabia, and raiding becomes at once unfashionable, but if there is the least loss of control at the centre then out go the raiders, all intent on fun and *chawil* (boot).

Common thieving is punished by the loss of the right hand for the first offence, and so on for subsequent offences, and this punishment has the sanction of the Sha'ikh Law behind it. The method is in force throughout Sa'udi Arabia to-day, in Yemen and in some of the neighbouring Arab states of the Persian Gulf.

Among the Northern Badawin of Arabia, if an accused man denies a theft, and there is no proof either way, the shaikh of a tribe or community sometimes orders the accused to stand the ordeal by fire. A sword or samoud is brought and the end heated red hot in a fire and applied for a couple of seconds to the accused's tongue. If he is innocent he will not be hurt and will depart honourably acquitted and with head held high. If guilty his tongue will at once be badly burnt and the crime will be brought home to him.

I only once had a case of this brought to my notice. Shaikh Mahruth ibn Fahad Beg al Hadhal, of the Amarat ('Anizah), had a sword stolen from him when camped near Kerbela in 1922. As Political Officer Middle Euphrates I had a man from Musayib arrested on suspicion, the theft having been laid at his door by Shaikh Mahruth himself. No definite evidence was forthcoming and I was about to release the